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Bush and the CIA

WHEN PRESIDENT FORD recently nominated George Bush to head the CIA, it didn't take long for both well meaning and political opposition to surface.

Several major newspapers and at least two senators, Democrats Frank Church and William Proxmire, came out against Bush, now U.S. envoy to China, long before he could come home and testify on his own behalf.

The objections to Bush boil down to two: He is a former chairman of the Republican National Committee, and he has no professional background in intelligence work.

To be facetious for a moment, one could say that a head of the national committee under Richard Nixon who didn't get indicted must be very honorable or very stealthy, both useful qualities in a CIA boss.

More seriously, however, Bush's detractors assume that because of his GOP background he would "politicize" the CIA and would not refuse if a Republican president asked him to do something dirty on behalf of the party.

Such suspicions are most unfair to Bush, who has a record of integrity, and to the trade of politician,

which is often followed by decent people.

As to Bush's not being an intelligence insider, all one can say is bravo. For most of its history the CIA was led by professionals, such as Allen Dulles and Richard Helms, and the country is still reeling about disclosures about the agency's illegal domestic snooping and its bizarre plots to kill foreign leaders.

If the CIA is to be reformed, live under its charter and give up stunts like trying to make Fidel Castro's beard fall out, it will take the efforts of a talented outsider, not one with close links to the spook network which brought the agency into disrepute.

Bush has been a naval aviator, successful businessman, two-term congressman from Texas, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, head of the U.S. mission in Peking, as well as chairman of the GOP's national committee.

That varied background should entitle him to a fair hearing on his qualifications to head the CIA — not the premature cloak and dagger job some are trying to do on his nomination.